

MODERN GEOGRAPHY.

A DESCRIPTION

OF THE

EMPIRES, KINGDOMS, STATES, AND COLONIES;

WITH THE

OCEANS, SEAS, AND ISLES;

IN ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD:

INCLUDING THE MOST RECENT DISCOVERIES,

AND POLITICAL ALTERATIONS.

DIGESTED ON A NEW PLAN.

BY JOHN PINKERTON.

THE ASTRONOMICAL INTRODUCTION

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THE ARTICLE AMERICA,

CORRECTED AND CONSIDERABLY ENLARGED,

BY DR. BARTON, OF PHILADELPHIA.

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MALAYA OR MALACCA.

PROGRESSIVE GEOGRAPHY.—NAME AND EXTENT.—LANGUAGE.—DIVISIONS.—PRODUCTS.—CITY OF MALACCA.—GENERAL REMARKS ON THE MALAYS.—ISLES OF ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR.

HAVING thus finished the description of the chief native empires of Asia, a foreign power, that of the English in Hindostan, will naturally attract the next attention, as perhaps not unequal in real and effective force even to the greatest of these empires. While the English colonies in America claim a decided preponderance over any power on that continent, it is not a little surprising to behold the natives of a remote European isle exercising such sway in Asia, and influencing the councils of the most remote potentates. The colony established in New Holland is also a striking and singular feature in human history; and will probably secure lasting ascendancy in a region before unknown. Were Egypt to yield to the British arms, it might be asserted that the English name is pre-eminent in every quarter of the globe.* Such are the fruits of national freedom, the parent of industry and enterprise.

But as the British empire in Hindostan only embraces a comparatively small part of that extensive region, indissolubly connected with the others by identity of population, manners, and laws, it seems preferable to follow a plan merely geographical in describing the remaining states of Asia; and, after completing the account of those beyond the Ganges, to proceed to Hindostan, Persia, and Arabia.

In the same view of geographical connection, where the political weight of the state deserves little consideration, either from power or durability, it will be proper, after the preceding description of the Birman territories, to subjoin some account of that peninsula appended to them on the south, and styled Malaya or Malacca.

PROGRESSIVE GEOGRAPHY. This Chersonese was certainly unknown to the ancients, and seems to have escaped the knowledge of Marco Polo, though the isle of Sumatra appears to have been known to him by the name of Java Minor, if this be not his Maletur, where he

* This event has since happened—but Egypt is resigned to Turkish barbarism.

says there was abundance of spices, and the natives had a proper and peculiar speech*.

However this be, the Portuguese are regarded as the first discoverers of Malacca, to which they were led by the vain idea of finding the golden Chersonese of the ancients. When Sequeira reached this peninsula in 1509, he found it subject to Mahmud, a Mahometan prince; while the capital, Malacca, had acquired some consideration from its favourable position, as a mart of trade between China and Hindostan. In 1511, the Portuguese conquered the peninsula.

NAME. The name is derived from the Malays, who are mostly Mahometans, and in some degree civilized; but the inland parts seem to be possessed by a more rude native race, little known amidst the imperfection of materials concerning this country, neither the Portuguese nor Dutch being eminent in scientific precision.

EXTENT. The northern limits are not strictly defined; but Malacca is about eight degrees, or near 560 British miles in length, by about 150 miles of medial breadth, a territory sufficiently ample for a powerful monarchy, had its native productions corresponded with its extent.

LANGUAGE. As the Malays have established several governments in Sumatra, the best ideas concerning them may be derived from M. Marsden's history of that isle. Their language has been called the Italian of the east, from the melody of frequent vowels and liquids; and the above intelligent traveller has produced the following specimen;

Apo goono pasang paleeto
Callo teedab dangan soomboonia?
Apo goono bermine matto
Callo teedab dangan soongoonia?

Y
 What signifies attempting to light a lamp
 If the wick be wanting?
 What signifies making love with the eyes,
 If nothing in earnest be intended?

The Malays use the Arabic character; and an influx of words of that language has followed the adoption of the Mahometan religion†. They write on paper, using ink of their own composition, and pens made of the twigs of a tree. The purest Malay is still supposed to be spoken in the peninsula, and has no inflexion of nouns or verbs.

DIVISIONS. Though the manners and customs of the Malays be deeply tinctured with those common to other Mahometans, yet in the inland parts of the country the people remain nearly in a savage state, and do not partake of the civilization of the adjacent kingdoms

* See in the account of the Asiatic islands a note on this subject. Some may imagine that his Boeash or Loeach is perhaps *Levek* or *Camboja* (D'Anville's Asia). But it seems more probable that *Boeash* is the northern part of Malacca, and *Maletur* the southern: for his *Garbinus* is the south-west point, and *Stiroccus* the south-east.

† Hence Thunberg, ii. 228. has ridiculously supposed the Malay to be a dialect of the Arabic. It is of Sanscrit origin. *As. Res.* iv. 217.

of Pegu and Siam. In the last century Mandelslo, or rather Olearius, who published his voyage, describes Malacca as divided into two kingdoms, that of Patani in the north, and that of Yohor or Jor in the south*.

PATANI. The town of Patani was inhabited by Malays and Siamese; and the people were Mahometans tributary to Siam. The town is built of reeds and wood, but the mosque of brick; and the commerce was conducted by the Chinese and the Portuguese settlers, the native Malays being chiefly employed in fishing and agriculture. According to this traveller there are continual rains with a north-east wind during the months of November, December, and January. Agriculture was conducted with oxen and buffaloes, the chief product being rice. There was abundance of game and fruits, and the forests swarmed with monkeys, tigers, wild boars, and wild elephants. From the kingdom of Patani the Portuguese used yearly to purchase about 1500 cattle for their settlement at Malacca.

YOHOR. The kingdom of Yohor occupied the southern extremity of the Chersonese, the chief towns being Linga, Bintam, Carimon, and Batusabert; which last was the capital of the kingdom, being situated about six leagues from the sea on the river Yohor, in a marshy situation, so that the small houses were obliged to be raised about eight feet from the ground. All the country belonging to the king, lands were assigned to any person who demanded them, but the Malays were so indolent that the country was chiefly left to the wild luxuriance of nature. Even in the time of this traveller, the Malayan language was esteemed the most melodious in the east, and as universal as the French in Europe, a remark which has been recently repeated by Thunberg.

PRODUCTS. The inland part of the Malayan peninsula seems to remain full of extensive aboriginal forest; nor do the ancient or modern maps indicate any towns or villages in these parts. The indolence of the inhabitants has prevented the country from being explored; but it produces pepper and other spices, with some precious gums and wood, among which perhaps the teak may be found. The wild elephants supply abundance of ivory; but the tin, the only mineral mentioned, may perhaps be the produce of Banka†. If gold or diamonds had existed, they could not have escaped the avarice of the Dutch; and we may rest assured this country could never have been the Golden Chersonese of the ancients.

The form of the Malay government may be conceived from those transplanted to Sumatra, and described by M. Marsden‡. The titles of the sultans, or rajas are numerous and fantastic. Next in rank are a kind of nobles, who in Sumatra are called Dattoos, to whom the others are vassals.

* Vol. i. col. 338. edit. 1727, 2 vols. fol.

† Col. 342.

‡ Yet Mr. Pennant, *View of Hindostan*, iii. 30, asserts from the authority of Hamilton, who visited this country in 1719, that much gold is found in the river which runs from near the city of Malacca towards the eastern coast.

¶ 267, 287.

MALACCA CITY. The city of Malacca, which seems to have been founded by Mahometans in the thirteenth century, was held by the Portuguese till 1641, when it was seized by the Dutch. It was considered as situated in the southern kingdom of Yohor; and in the last century was supposed to contain 12,000 inhabitants, of which however only 3000 dwelled within the walls. Not above 300 were native Portuguese, the other being a mixed race of Mahometan Malays, accounted among the chief merchants of the east. The Portuguese settlement did not extend above five leagues around; yet became highly important from its advantageous position for Indian and Chinese commerce*.

The mean and disgraceful jealousy of the Dutch concerning their oriental possessions renders the recent accounts of this city imperfect.

MALAYS. In general the Malays are a well made people, though rather below the middle stature, their limbs well shaped, but small, and particularly slender at the wrists and ancles. Their complexion is tawney, their eyes large, their noses seem rather flattened by art than nature; and their hair is very long, black, and shining.

Besides the tiger and elephant, Malacca produces the civet cat described by Sonnerat, who also mentions that wild men are found in this peninsula; perhaps the noted Orang Outangs. Some singular birds are also found; and Malacca likewise produces a most delicious fruit called the mangosten.

In imitation of Mr. Pennant†, this account shall be closed with a few extracts from M. le Poivre's philosophical voyages, that judicious observer having given a more just idea of the Malays than any other traveller.

“ Beyond the kingdom of Siam is the peninsula of Malacca, a country formerly well peopled, and consequently well cultivated. This nation was once one of the greatest powers, and made a very considerable figure in the theatre of Asia. The sea was covered with their ships, and they carried on a most extensive commerce. Their laws however were apparently very different from those which subsist among them at present. From time to time they sent out numbers of colonies, which one after another peopled the islands of Sumatra, Java, Borneo, Celebez or Macassar, the Moluccas, the Phillippines, and those innumerable islands of the Archipelago which bound Asia on the east, and which occupy an extent of 700 leagues in longitude from east to west, by about 600 of latitude from north to south. The inhabitants of all these islands, those at least upon the coasts, are the same people. They speak almost the same language, have the same laws, the same manners. Is it not somewhat singular that this nation, whose possessions are so extensive, should scarce be known in Europe? I shall endeavour to give you an idea of those laws and those manners; you will from thence easily judge of their agriculture.

“ Travellers who make observations on the Malays, are astonished to find in the centre of Asia, under the scorching climate of the line, the laws, the manners, the customs, and the prejudices, of the ancient

* Mandelslo, i. Col 337.

† Outlines of the Globe. London, 1803, 4 vol. 4to. iii. 33.

inhabitants of the north of Europe. The Malays are governed by feudal laws, that capricious system conceived for the defence of the liberty of a few against the tyranny of one, whilst the multitude is subjected to slavery and oppression.

“ A chief, who has the title of king or sultan, issues his commands to his great vassals, who obey when they think proper; these have inferior vassals, who often act in the same manner with regard to them. A small part of the nation live independent, under the title of *Oramcai* or noble, and sell their services to those who pay them best; whilst the body of the nation is composed of slaves, and lives in perpetual servitude.

“ With these laws the Malays are restless, fond of navigation, war, plunder, emigrations, colonies, desperate enterprises, adventures, and gallantry. They talk incessantly of their honour and their bravery, whilst they are universally considered by those with whom they have intercourse as the most treacherous ferocious people on the face of the globe; and yet, which appeared to me extremely singular, they speak the softest language of Asia. What the Count de Forbin has said in his memoirs of the ferocity of the Macassars, is exactly true, and is the reigning characteristic of the whole Malay nations. More attached to the absurd laws of their pretended honour than to those of justice or humanity, you always observe that amongst them the strong oppress and destroy the weak; their treaties of peace and friendship never subsisting beyond that self-interest which induced them to make them, they are almost always armed, and either at war amongst themselves, or employed in pillaging their neighbours.

“ This ferocity which the Malays qualify under the name of courage, is so well known to the European companies who have settlements in the Indies, that they have universally agreed in prohibiting the captains of their ships, who may put into the Malay islands, from taking on board any seamen of that nation, except in the greatest distress, and then on no account to exceed two or three.

“ It is nothing uncommon for a handful of these horrid savages suddenly to embark, attack a vessel by surprise, poignard in hand, massacre the people, and make themselves masters of her. Malay barks, with twenty-five or thirty men, have been known to board European ships of thirty or forty guns, in order to take possession of them, and murder, with their poignards, great part of the crew. The Malay history is full of such enterprises, which mark the desperate ferocity of those barbarians.

“ The Malays who are not slaves go always armed; they would think themselves disgraced if they went abroad without their poignards, which they call *Cris*; the industry of this nation even surpasses itself in the fabric of this destructive weapon.

“ As their lives are a perpetual round of agitation and tumult they could never endure the long flowing habits which prevail among the other Asiatics. The habits of the Malays are exactly adapted to their shapes, and loaded with a multitude of buttons, which fasten them close to their bodies in every part. I relate these seemingly trifling observations in order to prove that in climates the most opposite the same laws

produce similar manners, customs, and prejudices: their effect is the same too with respect to agriculture.

“ The lands possessed by the Malays are in general of a superior quality; nature seems to have taken pleasure in there assembling most favourite productions. They have not only those to be found in the territories of Siam, but a variety of others. The country is covered with odoriferous woods, such as the eagle, or aloes wood, the sandal, and the *Cassia odorata*, a species of cinnamon; you there breathe an air impregnated with the odours of innumerable flowers of the greatest fragrance, of which there is a perpetual succession the year round, the sweet flavour of which captivates the soul, and inspires the most voluptuous sensations. No traveller wandering over the plains of Malacca but feels himself strongly impelled to wish his residence fixed in a place so luxuriant in allurements, where nature triumphs without the assistance of art.....In the midst of all this luxuriance of nature the Malay is miserable; the culture of the lands, abandoned to slaves, is fallen into contempt. These wretched labourers, dragged incessantly from their rustic employments by their restless masters, who delight in war and maritime enterprises, have rarely time, and never resolution, to give the necessary attention to the labouring of their grounds; their lands in general remain uncultivated, and produce no kind of grain for the subsistence of the inhabitants”.

The reader who wishes for more ample information concerning this peninsula may be referred to the voyages of Nieuhof and Hamilton. As the latter asserts that the inland inhabitants, whom he calls the Monocaboes, are a different race from the Malays, and of much lighter complexion, it would seem probable that the Malays passed into this country from the north or south, and there is no small difficulty in accounting for their origin. The language should be skillfully collated with those of the neighbouring countries, and even with the ancient dialects of Hindostan, as perhaps they may be found to be the same with the Pallis, traditionally said to have been the most early inhabitants of that celebrated country.

ANDAMAN. Opposite to the coast of Malacca, though at a considerable distance, are the islands of Andaman and of Nicobar. The great Andaman is about 140 British miles in length, but not more than twenty in the greatest breadth, indented by deep bays affording excellent harbours, and intersected by vast inlets and creeks, one of which, navigable for small vessels, passes quite through the isle*. The soil is chiefly black mould, the cliffs of a white arenacious stone. The extensive forests afford some precious trees, as ebony, and the *mellori*, or Nicobar bread fruit. The only quadrupeds seem to be wild hogs, monkeys, and rats. The sea supplies numerous fish, among which are mullets, soles, and excellent oysters. The people of the Andamans are as little civilized as any in the world, and are probably cannibals, having at least a particular antipathy against strangers. They have woolly heads, and perfectly resemble negroes; being as some report descended from a crew of African slaves; but they are mentioned in the ninth century by the Mahometan travellers with all

* As. Res. iv. 385.

their peculiarities, and it is difficult to conceive how a cargo of slaves could at an early period be steered in that direction. The south-west monsoon may have driven their canoes from the coasts of Africa; and, opposed in civilized parts, they may have seized this desert isle*. Their character is truly brutal, insidious, and ferocious, and their canoes of the rudest kind. On Barren Isle, about fifteen leagues to the east of the Andamans, is a violent volcano which emits showers of red hot stones; and the whole island has a singular and volcanic appearance. A British settlement has been recently formed on the greater Andaman, and some convicts sent thither from Bengal. The natives, about 2000, have already profited by the example of English industry.

NICOBAR. The Nicobars are three; the largest being about five leagues in circumference†. They produce cocoa and areca trees, with yams and sweet potatos; and the eatable bird's nests, so highly esteemed in China, abound here as well as in the Andamans. The people are of a copper colour, with small oblique eyes and other Tatar features. In their dress a small stripe of cloth hangs down behind; and hence the ignorant tales of seamen which led even Linnaeus to infer that some kinds of men had tails. The only quadrupeds are swine and dogs. The traffic is in cocoa nuts, of which one hundred are given for a yard of blue cloth. The tree called by the natives *larum*, by the Portuguese *mellori*, produces an excellent bread fruit, different from the kind found in the interior parts of Africa, and also from that of Otaheite. The fruit is said to weigh twenty or thirty pounds; and some plants have been brought to the botanical garden of the East-India company near Calcutta.

* They are, after all, probably of the same race with the other negroes of the Asiatic Isles, which see.

† As. Res. iii. 149.